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How to Talk About Race Without Starting a Riot: David Wilson Returns to RWU

Acclaimed journalist and filmmaker kicks off spring semester's President's Distinguished Speakers Series events and a yearlong series titled "150 Years Later: The 13th Amendment & Race in America"



February 9, 2015 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – Drawing on history, current events and his own experience as a young black man growing up in Newark, N.J., journalist and filmmaker David A. Wilson has emerged as a leading voice in encouraging an open dialogue and national conversation on race relations in America.

On Tuesday, Feb. 17, Wilson will make his second visit to Roger Williams University as part of the President's Distinguished Speakers Series for an event titled "How to Talk About Race Without Starting a Riot." Wilson's groundbreaking documentary, "Meeting David Wilson," will be screened in its entirety, and a question and answer session will follow.

Wilson's visit comes on the heels of protests in Ferguson, Mo., New York City and other communities, which have illuminated deeply rooted political and racial divides that linger across the nation. His perspective is that in order to work toward solutions on issues related to race, open and honest dialog is a critical ingredient.

A sought-after commentator for news programs from “World News Tonight” to “Today,” Wilson has emerged as a leading voice on race relations in the U.S. He is the founder and executive editor of theGrio.com, the first and largest video-based news portal dedicated to providing African-Americans the stories that are unavailable or underrepresented in national news outlets.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree from Rowan University, Wilson has since developed an extensive background in video and news production. He has worked on the CBS news program “48 Hours,” as well as serving as lead producer and overseeing newsroom operations for Network News Service, a national news gathering service and an ABC, CBS and FOX News conglomerate.

In his 2008 film, Wilson explores his family’s roots on a journey that brings him to North Carolina, where he discovers the plantation where his ancestors were enslaved, and also finds the descendent of their slave master: a 62-year-old man also named David Wilson.

The Feb. 17 presentation will take place in the University’s Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Building, Room 157, on the University’s Bristol campus at One Old Ferry Road. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the event will begin at 6 p.m. The event is free and open to the public; no tickets are required. For more information, call (401) 254-3166.

Launched in 2011, the President’s Distinguished Speakers Series at Roger Williams University invites thought leaders from a wide range of disciplines to share perspectives, inspire conversations and enrich the intellectual lives of students, faculty and staff at Roger Williams as well as members of the local community. As part of the series, each guest is invited to devote much of the daylong visit to direct engagement with students in classroom sessions, offering RWU students unique opportunities for one-on-one interactions with some of the world’s leading authors, scholars, artists and public servants.

Wilson’s appearance is also part of a yearlong series at RWU titled *150 Years Later: The 13th Amendment & Race in America*, which calls upon us to both celebrate the monumental legislation to abolish slavery, but also to reflect critically on the current state of race relations in the U.S.